

Organic and Paid Social Media Marketing Strategies for the Restaurant Industry

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Abstract. *Undoubtedly, social media marketing is a way to make magic in the restaurant industry; yet, UGC and online reviews have further cemented social media's capacity to influence consumer decisions. The goal of this paper is to analyze organic and paid social media marketing's impact on the various facets of the restaurant industry, indicating their relative advantages, challenges, and impact on performance. Thus, in furthering the current body of knowledge on social media market research, this paper will additionally analyze how restaurants may strategically employ paid and organic strategies so that they can maximize customer engagement via awareness and brand visibility toward longer-term success. This article also discusses how to run a successful paid Social Media Marketing campaign with strategy, with emphasis on the restaurant environment.*

Keywords: *Social media, social media marketing, restaurant industry, organic social media, paid social media, purchase intentions.*

1 Introduction

Social media turns out to become an integral part in the restaurant industry in today's hectic business environment. Socializing on Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, or even Twitter has completely changed the pattern through which a restaurant connects and communicates with its end customers, showcasing its offerings and thus enabling growth. That strategy racked up in the restaurant's presence on social media would soon establish the brand by emphasizing its own distinctiveness and creating meaningful relationships with customers.

The posting of high-quality images, videos, and promotions about the menu items, ambiance, and customer experiences builds an engaging presence online. For example, signature dishes could be presented, live cooking shows could be conducted, and behind-the-kitchen-scene footage of customer experiences could build the brand. When restaurants receive online reviews and user-generated content, the influences of social media magnify.

Two broad categories can be identified for social media marketing i.e. organic and paid. Organic social media marketing activity is to build an online presence, without engaging in paid campaign efforts, through the use of content and through authentic engagement with followers. This content is intended to be valuable to the audience so that they would naturally want to voluntarily engage with and share it. Organic social media marketing, thus, succeeds in building community and seems authentic, qualities very important for small and independent restaurants often strapped for budgets. Lepkowska-White (2017) notes that organic social media have been helpful for such establishments to create awareness with their audience and build relationships at little costs-the costs of running these accounts are the only ones involved in this. Examples of organic content, such as customer testimonials, photographs with great food, and user-generated contents, increase the visibility through location tags and trending hashtags. Organic strategies are not that quick in streamlining measurable results because of competition and platform algorithm limitations, though.

Paid social media campaigns present an opportunity for restaurants to effectively promote time-sensitive offers, new menus, and special events. Facebook ads, for example, can run limited discounts targeting customers in a specific local area, while an Instagram influencer partnership can market a new dish to a larger public audience. Common measures for paid social media include CTRs, conversion rates, and ROAS. Paid strategies allow greater control in terms of content visibility and audience targeting, therefore giving restaurants the ability to optimize campaigns depending on performance data.

A balanced approach enables optimal complementarity from paid and organic social media strategies and gives a maximum drive to the overall efforts of social media marketing. For one, organic content builds brands' trust and customer relationships while paid content expands visibility and engagement. By tactically combining both organic and paid strategies, restaurants create brand awareness, increase customer engagement, and promote sustainable business growth in a highly competitive environment.

2. Social Media Marketing

Research captures some of the main strategic dimensions of social media marketing strategies as scope, culture, structure, and governance (Felix et al., 2017). Scope defines the kinds and types of content to be shared, while culture will reflect the tone and style of communication; structure focuses on the organization of social media function within the business; governance determines the rules of content management and interaction with customers in such media. The alignment of these components with the corporate strategy should take place because it will strengthen market positions and engagement strategies.

Paid social media marketing is about targeting promotional content for specific audiences using social media. The category of paid content consists of text-based ads, images, videos, and interactive posts, which target audiences according to demographics, behaviors, and preferences. Facebook and Instagram type platforms offer advanced targeting based on specific locations, age groups, areas of interest, and buyers' purchasing behavior. Such precision allows businesses to set their aim on designated audience sectors to enhance visibility and almost instantly create results. Paid strategies thus complement those of organic marketing through increasing brand awareness, generating leads, and finally converting them.

The impact of SMM is overtly evident on consumer behavioral patterns and business performances, especially in the restaurant sector. Bushara et al. (2023) contend that effective SMM raises perception value for followers of restaurants, increases purchase intentions and willingness to pay premium prices, and allows for positive online reviews to grow in popularity. Within SMM, relationship marketing strategies entail building long-term customer connections through personalized engagement and continued interaction, ultimately boosting customer loyalty and repeat business (Lucas and Sines, 2019).

An effective SMM strategy must bring together creative content, targeted strategic placement, and continuous engagement. Also, the businesses can continually measure performance via data analytics and thus improve the quality of their approach to increase the success of a campaign. All in all, successful SMM pays off by growing businesses through increased brand awareness and customer interaction, eventually resulting in higher sales and customer loyalty.

Table 1: Types of Ad Format

Ad Format	Description	Best Use Case
Image Ads	Includes a single image and a brief description of the product, service, or promotion.	Ideal for creating quick and visually appealing content that captures attention. Best for brand awareness and driving clicks.
Video Ads	Uses videos to showcase the brand's products, services, or promotions.	Effective for storytelling, demonstrating product features, and increasing engagement.
Carousel Ads	Includes multiple images or videos that users can swipe through to provide more information on the brand or product.	Suitable for showcasing product variations, step-by-step guides, or multiple features.
Sponsored Posts	Posts created in collaboration with influencers or content creators to promote the brand or product to their followers.	Effective for influencer marketing, building trust, and reaching a wider audience.
Stories Ads	Appear in the stories section of social media apps and often include vertical videos or images.	Ideal for time-sensitive promotions and creating immersive, full-screen experiences.
Messenger Ads	Appear within the messaging interface of social media platforms and can include messages, images, and videos.	Best for direct customer engagement, driving conversations, and customer service.

Source: Prepared by authors

3. Types of Social Media Marketing

3.1 Organic Social Media

Organic social media refers to the act of sharing content on social media channels without paying for placement or sponsored posts. This encompasses posting updates, pictures, and videos and other kinds of branding-fresh-related content on social media pages free of cost to engage followers, build brand awareness, and drive traffic to the website. Organic social media marketing thus creates websites and increases traffic to their sales and thus develops long-term loyalty for the brand. Also, it provides real-time opportunities and insights into market trends and consumer

behavior (Iskalachi, 2021). Organic social-media marketing allows firms to promote their brand or product without any direct financial expenditures. According to BrightEdge (2019), organic search remains the dominant source of trackable web traffic and standing as the number one marketing channel, while paid search only continues to make its way up.

3.2 Pros of Organic Social Media Marketing

Authentic Engagement and Brand Loyalty: Organic social media supports two-way communications, creating pathways for brands to engage earnestly with customers outside of pure transactions. Through this authenticity, they gain brand awareness and work on sustainable relationships, thereby increasing customer loyalty and advocacy. Connected customers are subsequently likely to provide consistent engagement and actively invigorate the brand within their circle. **Cost-Effective:** Organic media bring budget-friendliness to the table since brands realize visibility and engagement via regular posts, comments, and sharing activities without the burden of paid campaigns. **Long-term Sustainability:** Organic marketing approaches look beyond short-lived spikes from paid advertisements to traffic towards building trust and familiarization. **Community Building:** Meaningful connection through direct engagement with followers, responding to comments, and sharing user-generated content cultivates a nurturing community.

3.3 Cons of Organic Social Media Marketing

Time-intensive: Organic social media requires ongoing efforts to create content of high quality, keep up a consistent posting schedule, and engage the audiences. **Limited Reach Without Advertising:** While organic applied strategies are undoubtedly authentic, these do not get very far due to social media algorithms favoring paid content as a result of lower engagement rates and slower audience growth unless supplemented by targeted paid publicity. **Dependent on Algorithm Updates:** Organic social media has a dependence on the platform algorithms changes it is very likely that the visibility of content will change significantly. Brands have to constantly update their strategies for getting maintained engagement and reach. The best of both worlds lies in using both organic methods and targeted paid advertising to maximize reach and give the marketing impact a boost.

3.4 Paid Social Media

Paid social media marketing, on the other hand, entailed advertising your cost in creating the original posts in platforms like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, and X (formerly known as Twitter). It allows you to bring your specified target audiences based upon their demographic profiles and interests on to drive leads, purchases, or even exposure about your brand at a more efficient rate in ways that are not possible by organic measures alone.

Paid social media boosts visibility through financial investment, unlike organic techniques that leverage unpaid involvement for visibility. According to Coleman (2021), paid social media is increasingly less expensive than prior forms of advertising, in fact controlling all the cost according to duration of the campaign and audience reach within those days.

By 2025, there will be more than 4.6 billion social media users, and these facilitate massive reach and complex targeting. By 2025, it was estimated that global expenditure on social media ads would reach \$226 billion, an increase of 15% over 2022, and exceed \$250 billion by 2024 (Austin,

2024). This growing investment emphasizes the effect of paid social media towards branding visibility, as well as engagement and sales.

3.5 The Pros of Paid Social Media Advertising

Paid advertising on social media accounts for a major part of brand marketing strategies by reaching out to large audiences, with users globally spending an average of 2 hours and 28 minutes daily on social media platforms (Austin, 2024).

Key Advantages

Instant Results and Visibility: Paid ads ramp up brand visibility fast and directly, serving effectively for time-critical campaigns and Gen Z (Nizam, 2024).

- **Accurate Targeting:** Certain platforms collect data on user demographics and interests to let businesses serve specific content to customers, thus improving conversion and budget expenditure.
- **Wider Reach:** Paid campaigns push new potential customers outside the bounds of organic reach. Increased posts on platforms such as Instagram guarantee that the brand receives eyeballs, thereby aiding in the growth of the brand.
- **Greater Brand Awareness:** Increased advertisement exposure leads to brand recognition and trust, thus helping customers engage more with the product and recall it.
- **Support of Organic Efforts:** High-performing organic content is boosted to expand its reach in synergistic ways that help increase organic engagement.
- **Advanced Analytics:** Platforms produce detailed performance metrics (i.e., CTR, conversions) that guide businesses in optimizing future campaigns and strategy enhancements.
- **Budget and Placement Control:** A business may set the budget for placed ads to maximize impact while avoiding overspending.
- **Ad Formats** such as carousel and video ads support all stages of the buyer journey from awareness through to conversion.
- **Lead Generation and Sales:** Through effective targeting with attractive offers, paid social media becomes a must for generating high-quality leads and sales for business growth.

Joint implementation strategy keeps both organic and paid methods for maximum visibility, high engagement, and marketing success.

3.6 The Cons of Paid Social Media Advertising

Though paid social advertising features various advantages, it is nevertheless beset with disadvantages. Nestled in the list of these disadvantages is another major obstacle: cost. Effective campaigns often have to be run on considerable budgets, which may pose a hardship for small businesses that may lack funds. Competitive bidding on ad platforms sends the prices soaring, requiring prudent management of the budget. Another disadvantage is that paid advertising creates a short-lived chance to market their products and services.

4. Effective Strategies for Organic Social Media Marketing for Restaurants

Here are strategies that discuss various important methods of utilizing organic social media

marketing in the restaurant sector.

1. **Select the Right Platforms** -Choosing the right social media platforms maximizes visibility and customer interaction. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok are best for the appeal of food pictures, whereas Facebook is good in constructing communities and advertising an event. Assuring from analysis of customer behavior and competitors' activities, the target audience will dictate the nature of social engagement, that is, the presence of the content where it counts.
2. **State Clear Objectives and Metrics** -Setting clear goals will ensure that social media efforts are aligned with business objectives. A restaurant in some cases wants to increase reservations, drive traffic to the website, or increase orders for takeout. In this case, it will measure success through key performance indicators (KPIs), including follower growth, engagement on posts, and reviews by customers.
3. **Use More Visuals** -Use high-quality images and videos to catch your customers' attention. Attractive images of menu items should be posted, along with some action shots taken in the kitchen and snapshots of customer experiences for engagement.
4. **Using Hashtags with Purpose**-Using hashtags in a defined way increases the discoverability of content. Searching popular food-themed and local hashtags helps gain traffic from potential customers nearby.
5. **Leverage Actionable Insights from Analytics** -Determining which content performs well among audiences can be achieved through monitoring social media analytics. Examples include reach, engagement rates, and customer inquiries, all indicators of a performance review for optimizing content..
6. **Rewarding Customer Interaction**-Rewards boost customer relationships and strengthen them to be loyal. Offer rewards such as discounts or appointments for free desserts for tagging the restaurant or sharing meal photographs. Highlight user-generated content to create a community feeling.
7. **Follow the 80/20 Rule** -The involvement of an audience is maintained by a balanced content strategy. According to this rule, 80% of the content must provide value and 20% can consist of offers or the new menu. For 80% of your posts, talk about recipes and cooking tips in sharing customer experiences.
8. **Involve Yourself in Relevant Groups and Communities** -Being a member of the food forum group or any other community in this regard is definitely very important for developing better visibility of the restaurant as well as improving ties with customers because it allows one to join these communities.
9. **Keep Current with Trends** Stay attentive to fresh social media trends to keep the content fresh and engaging. Trending techniques such as short, interactive, backstage clips really move an audience. There are also seasonal contents such as holiday specials that contribute to engagement and foot traffic.

5. Effective Strategies for Paid Social Media Marketing for Restaurants

Here, this article describes effective strategies for running a successful paid social media marketing campaign in the restaurant industry.

Setting Objectives through Qualitative and Quantitative Research - Clear and concise objectives form the foundation of success for a paid social media scheme. Either qualitative or quantitative research would play import roles in this process. Qualitative research generates non-numerical

data that reveal attitudes and behaviors of customers. Customer surveys, focus groups, and social media listening fine-tune the emotional drivers that weigh into dining decisions and customer expectations. In defining the target audience, groundwork for a successful campaign is made. Ideal customers are described in terms of age, gender, area, level of income, interests, and dining behaviors. Running these changes against tools like Facebook Audience Insights and Google Analytics will help in assembling detailed customer profiles. Choosing the Right Platforms: What media platform you choose is extremely crucial to the success of the campaign. Different platforms attract different demographics and behaviors. Facebook and YouTube reach a broad audience, while Instagram and TikTok are primarily for the young. LinkedIn could be one option for targeting professionals or high-end dining experiences.

Understanding what type of content works with each platform is key. Stunning food photography and short video clips of menu items could perform well on Instagram, whereas testimonials and behind-the-scenes footage could engage users better on Facebook or TikTok. Creating platform- and audience-specific content will increase engagement rates and conversion rates. Generating Ads and Content that Grab Attention: Surely compelling content ensures the success of paid social media campaigns. Ads must speak to the restaurant's own brand identity and what appeals to its target audience. Constructing Landing Pages That Work: Once an ad is clicked, the customer journey does not end. A well-executed landing page is essential in converting interest into action. Landing pages should allow for easy viewing and navigation and allow for easy conversions. Messaging on said landing page is to correspond to that of the advertisement so as to build trust and encourage action.

Paid Social Technology Set-Up: A good technical infrastructure will ensure that all paid social campaigns can be measured accurately and optimized. Track key performance indicators like click-through rates and conversion rates by installing necessary tracking pixels like Facebook Pixel or LinkedIn Insight Tag to collect valuable user behavior data. Use UTM codes to attach specific campaign parameters for precise performance monitoring through real-time reporting tools-like Google Analytics. Setting up the conversion API at Meta platforms tracks all the offline events, like purchases from restaurants or bookings done via phones, giving detailed insight into how effective the campaigns would be. Budgeting and Cost Management: High level clarity in the budget is necessary to cover the scale and reach of the campaign. CAC and total budget should be in sync with the restaurant's ability to absorb increased business due to this.

Allocating part of the budget into testing and learning. The initial CAC may increase as testing with different ad formats and targeting strategies, with optimization leading to over time lower CAC, improving long-term investment borrowed in the campaign. Sustainable ac to LTV ratios assures profit. Campaign optimization is the process of enhancing campaign efficiency and performance in a continuous process. If the setting is for brand awareness, metrics such as reach and impressions need to be observed closely.

6. Combining organic and paid social media

Integrating organic and paid social media activities considerably magnifies the marketing effectiveness by reaching out to a greater number of audiences, engaging them, and converting. This gives a great balance for brands to develop authenticity while continuing to cash in on advertising options to reach wider audiences. One strategy is to use organic social to gain

awareness, while the effectiveness of paid social is used to convert. Organic social media posts can portray the company culture, values, and products, which, in turn, allow the brand to build trust and authenticity with the target audience. Paid social can then amplify this content, allowing it to reach new audiences and, therefore, website traffic and leads. It also ensures that the brand's message is already being sent to current followers and also to potential new customers. User-generated content is yet another strong way of synergizing organic versus paid social media. Customer-generated content such as reviews, testimonials, and social media posts can translate into ads showcasing people's positive experiences. User-generated content can also provide further inspiration for other content that will resonate well within the audience in question. The application of both organic and paid social strategies in a complementary way maximizes the result from the one and the other to the brand. Organic content builds authenticity and trust while paid content ensures that wider reach and targeted engagements lead to brand awareness, engagement by consumers, and ultimately brand growth.

7. Conclusion

Paid social media marketing targets quite narrow audience segments for restaurants using platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, which offer advanced targeting based on demographics, behavior, and interests. Paid strategies such as carousel ads, video ads, and influencer partnerships generate immediate visibility and increase conversions by placing the content in front of the target audience. The performance metrics such as click-through rates (CTR) and return on ad spend (ROAS) are monitored to measure the effectiveness of a campaign and allow for data-driven adjustments for better results. This is a fully rounded marketing framework which organically combines organic and paid approaches. While organic contents help build a brand's identity and trust, the paid ones boost visibility and stimulate action from customers. Organic performance insights can inform targeted and engaging paid campaigns. User-generated content lends credibility since it shows authentic customer experiences.

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